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Memorandum of Conversation

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SUBJECT: German Attitudes toward London Four Power Working Group Report

PARTICIPANTS: German Side

APR 30 1959 U. S. SIDE

German Ambassador William G. Grewe
Minister Frans Krapf
Dr. Rolf Pauls, German Counselor
Mr. Robert Murphy-Deputy Under Sec.
Mr. Foy D. Kohler-Deputy Asst. Sec.
Mr. Alfred G. Vigderman-Deputy Dir. GER

COPIES TO:

S/P 1
S 2
S/S 3
(1cc)(7a) G (2) 4-5
C 6
EUR (2) (2cc)(5a,6a)
GER (2) (1cc)(8a)
GPA (2) 8-9
RA 10
KE 11
L 12

Amembassy Bonn 13
Amembassy London 14
Amembassy Moscow 15
Amembassy Paris (Embassy & USRO) 16
USERR Berlin 17

18-20

Ambassador Grewe confessed himself poorly informed on the London Four Power Working Group Report, because he had been traveling during the period the group had been sitting in London. He had the impression, however, that there was general agreement among the Four Powers, and that no new and sensational proposals had been advanced.

Dr. Pauls repeated the suggestion previously made by the German Embassy that the Four Western Foreign Ministers should agree no proposals should be advanced to Mr. Gromyko which had not been previously agreed among all the Western Foreign Ministers. Mr. Murphy acknowledged the validity of this point, particularly as the Russians would be astute to exploit any evidence of disunity among the Western allies. Ambassador Grewe remarked that the German concern was that there be no repetition of the embarrassment created by the advancement of the so-called "pilot scheme" by the British in Geneva in 1955.

Mr. Murphy said it was not very clear what was in the minds of German officialdom. The US delegation in London had the impression that the Germans had entered reservations on many topics. The Ambassador said that this impression was certainly not entirely unjustified.

Mr. Murphy asked whether on the question of reunification schemes and voting procedures for an East German-West German commission, there was any

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- 2 -

Federal Republic preoccupation with the point that the Socialists might be able by gaining with Communist members of the Commission to gain preponderance in such a commission. Ambassador Grewe said that the earlier U.S. proposal for representation on the commission based on the selection of members from the Laender would, in fact, raise questions of internal politics. Selection of members from the Laender tended to advance the concept of federalism. Such a proposal would be met with opposition from the Socialists for reason of domestic policy as well as of foreign policy, because of their well-known opposition to emphasis on the federal structure of the Federal Republic.

The conversation then turned to the existing "15-5" proposal in the Working Group report. Mr. Murphy inquired if this could be amended in some way to make it look more plausible. Dr. Grewe pointed out the Federal Republic's opposition to parity between the two sides which was indeed a matter of party politics. The Socialists have advanced the idea of absolute parity between representatives of the two parts of Germany. Dr. Grewe wondered why it was necessary to go so far into the details of the operation of the mixed commission. Mr. Murphy pointed out the public relations and psychological aspects of the Western package and the importance of seeming to propose a businesslike, constructive solution. We must clothe our proposals in reality although we are aware that there is little likelihood of Soviet acceptance. Mr. Murphy adverted to the French reservations on the security parts of the package based on the ground that it was a mistake to separate out elements of the August 1957 disarmament package. But, said Mr. Murphy, if you removed from the present package the force reductions proposed we should be losing a specific proposal which contributes much to the public appeal of the package. Dr. Grewe said the Chancellor would obviously want to put in as much in the way of disarmament proposals as possible.

Mr. Murphy referred to the German proposal that Berlin be discussed first with the Soviets, before discussion of the Western package, and characterized this as a false approach. Dr. Grewe said he was unaware of the reason for this German position. Mr. Vigderman pointed out that in Western conception the Berlin problem should be settled in the context of a settlement of the German problem. To discuss Berlin first amounted to a repudiation of this thesis.

Mr. Kohler referred to the Berlin plan in the Four stage package, pointing out that for the sake of public opinion it was necessary to have a Berlin proposal in the package. This could not be a proposal to maintain the status quo because if we were then driven to negotiations about Berlin alone, we would be starting, in fact, from our minimum position on Berlin and would be, therefore, at a great tactical disadvantage with the Soviets. Minister Krapf said that as he understood it, the German position was that a Berlin settlement should be arrived at first, as a condition to going on to other questions. Dr. Grewe confessed that he did not understand this view and was asked by Mr. Murphy to speak to the Foreign Minister and the Chancellor on this subject.

Mr. Murphy

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- 3 -

Mr. Murphy then referred to the U.S. view that the Western proposals should be tabled in detail early in the conference. Dr. Grewe pointed out that we had the same idea in Geneva in 1955. This proposal suffers from the disadvantage that if the entire Western position is tabled at once, there would be nothing to offer on the next days of the conference. Mr. Murphy countered that after discussion of the Western proposals and their rejection, we might put in our proposals on Berlin in isolation. In any case, having a tabled our package, we would have had the benefit of having laid down a constructive general proposal to advance the cause of peace and the relaxation of tensions. Doleing out the Western position with a teaspoon would not be constructive. Mr. Kohler pointed out that in any case, we would not likely make any progress with the Soviets and we should keep our attention focused on the necessity for winning public support. Mr. Murphy said there were plenty of topics in the Western package which would provide suitable opportunity for extended debate.

Dr. Grewe recalled the history of the Geneva conference as it related to the timing of the tabling of the Western proposals, recalling how difficult it had been to put forward additional proposals after the first major proposals had been put in.

Mr. Murphy turned to the question of the settlement of the Eastern frontiers of Germany. Dr. Grewe said the Germans had in mind repeating their declaration that they would not use force to change existing frontiers and that the Germans might agree this bilaterally with the Poles and Czechs. Minister Krapf suggested that this proposal, particularly as it might be linked with the resumption of diplomatic relations, might be saved for the period after the conference.

Mr. Murphy agreed that this would depend on the atmosphere of the conference. He pointed out that while there had been some relaxation by the Russians of the tensions they had created, it was always possible that the Russians could, at any point, increase these tensions, but if Mr. Khrushchev had decided to that Western firmness, he would find equal firmness on our side.

Dr. Grewe referred to his forthcoming conversation with the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister in Cadenabbia where, he thought, it might be possible to resurrect some of the good ideas previously advanced. Mr. Kohler rejoined that it was a good thing to have some fallback and countermeasure plans. Much work, he said, is still to be done. But it was first necessary to agree on a basic approach to the Russians. We must have a base from which to maneuver. Accordingly the urgent task was the coordination of the Western position on the Working Group report. Dr. Grewe agreed.

Dr. Pauls asked what had developed. In the conversation between the Secretary and Mr. Hammerskjold. Mr. Murphy replied that Mr. Hammerskjold wished to be kept informed generally on German matters so he could hold himself in readiness to act. Hammerskjold is aware of French opposition to UN intervention in Berlin crisis, but Mr. Murphy pointed out that we could not ignore the UN.

We should

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- 4 -

We should give it consideration in our treatment of the Berlin crisis and perhaps some role, but without tying our hands against our own interests. Mr. Kohler pointed out that Hammerskjold has no illusions that the UN could play any executive or administrative role in the Berlin crisis.

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